



RIVER DELTA FIRE DISTRICT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Chapter 3: Emergency Driving

REVISED: 10/5/2025

Emergency Driving

302.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a rapid response to life-threatening emergencies while maintaining the safety of district members and the public by requiring operators of district vehicles to conform to applicable California laws and regulations during an emergency response (Vehicle Code § 21055).

302.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Operator - Employee physically driving vehicle.

Authorized Operator - Employee who has successfully passed a Driver/Operator exam conducted by the Training Division allowing employee to drive code 3.

Emergency response - Any call for service or assistance including, but not limited to: fire, explosion or violent rupture; vehicle accident; human rescue; human entrapment; illness or injury; hazardous materials release or threat of contamination; flooding; threatened or actual acts of violence; any explosive, bomb or threatened bombing; any act of terrorism; any natural disaster; any release, spill or threat of release of radioactive materials; any spill, release or threat of release of any active biological agent; or any other circumstance that presents a threat to life-safety or to property.

302.2 POLICY

Fire personnel dispatched with emergency lights and siren shall consider the call an emergency and shall proceed immediately. Personnel responding to an emergency call shall continuously operate emergency lighting equipment, including at minimum a steady forward facing red light, and shall sound the siren as reasonably necessary (Vehicle Code § 21055).

Responding with emergency lights and siren does not relieve personnel of the duty to continue to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. The use of any other warning equipment without a red light and siren does not provide any exemption from the Vehicle Code.

Personnel should only respond with emergency lights and siren when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required.

Personnel not authorized to respond with emergency lights and siren shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

302.3 MULTI-COMPANY RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

During multi-company responses, operators should remain alert to the presence of other emergency vehicles and exercise due caution. Officers should consider alerting other nearby responding apparatus of their position due to anticipated convergence at intersections.



RIVER DELTA FIRE DISTRICT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Chapter 3: Emergency Driving

REVISED: 10/5/2025

During multi-company responses from the same location, companies should respond in the same code of response to reduce confusion of civilian drivers.

When responding in tandem, personnel on a secondary and tertiary apparatus must recognize that traffic yielding to the lead emergency vehicle may not expect secondary and tertiary emergency vehicles to follow and potentially create a hazard/collision.

302.4 INITIATING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

If the company officer believes an emergency response to any call is appropriate, the company officer shall ensure that SRFEC is immediately notified.

302.5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDING PERSONNEL

Fire personnel shall exercise sound judgment and due regard for life and property at all times including when operating a vehicle during emergency responses.

Safe arrival shall always have priority over unnecessary speed and reckless driving on route to an emergency incident.

Responsibilities of responding personnel include but are not limited to:

- (a) Ensuring all personnel are properly seated and restrained in their seats whenever the vehicle is in motion
- (b) Driving appropriately for the given road conditions
- (c) Responding to incidents in the correct mode of response
- (d) Knowledge of traffic patterns and best routes of travel
- (e) Common response routes and normal travel times of other apparatus during multi-company responses
- (f) Appropriate use of vehicle warning devices
- (g) Familiarity and adherence to California Vehicle Codes regarding emergency vehicles.

302.5.1 EXCEEDING POSTED SPEED LIMIT

Employees are authorized to exceed the posted speed limit by a maximum of 10 MPH only under favorable conditions. This applies only to light traffic, good roads, good visibility and dry pavement. Under less than favorable conditions, the posted speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible.

302.5.2 INTERSECTIONS

When approaching and crossing an intersection with the right-of-way, operators shall not exceed the posted speed limit.

302.5.3 SIGNAL LIGHTS AND STOP SIGNS

When approaching a red signal light or stop sign, drivers must come to a complete stop before entering the intersection, and will not proceed until it is safe to do so. For multi-lane roadways, the operator must stop and proceed only when they clear each lane of traffic.



RIVER DELTA FIRE DISTRICT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Chapter 3: Emergency Driving

REVISED: 10/5/2025

302.5.4 PASSING ON THE LEFT/ENTERING ONCOMING LANES OF TRAFFIC

Drivers may enter oncoming traffic lanes, providing that a clear view of opposing traffic is available and only if it is safe to do so. Driver will be held strictly accountable if an accident occurs in this situation.

- Traveling in center or oncoming traffic lanes:
 - Maximum travel speed is 20 mph
 - Require a complete stop at all traffic lights/stop signs

302.5.5 PASSING ON THE RIGHT

Passing on the right under Code 3 conditions is not permitted. When traffic is backed up with no forward progress, drivers have the following options:

- Shut off siren and wait for traffic to clear
- Shut off lights and siren and enter the right lane, only if safe to do so (in this condition you are part of the normal traffic flow and must observe all traffic laws)

302.5.6 SEAT BELTS

All personnel are required to use seat belts at all times when operating or riding in a district vehicle. The operator of the vehicle will confirm that all personnel are on-board with fastened seat belts before the vehicle is permitted to move. All personnel shall ride only in regular seats fitted with seat belts.

While responding to an incident or during routine driving, riding on tailboards or other exposed positions is not permitted.

302.5.7 USE OF PA

Officers are encouraged to employ the P.A. system on the radio to direct traffic to pull over to the right side in order to clear traffic lanes for emergency vehicles.

302.5.8 RAILROAD TRACKS

Regardless of response code, personnel are not authorized to cross railroad tracks when protective gates are down signifying an approaching train.

302.5.9 PRE-EMPTION

The Opticom System provides precise signal control that anticipates vehicle movement and helps operators reach their destinations as quickly and safely as possible. Operators must always retain the ability to stop at an Opticom controlled intersection should they not receive the expected right of way with signal change.

302.6 FAILURE OF EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

If apparatus or emergency equipment should fail to operate, the vehicle operator must terminate the emergency response. In all cases, the company officer shall notify SMC Communications of



RIVER DELTA FIRE DISTRICT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

SECTION 3: Emergency Driving

REVISED: 10/5/2025

the failure so that another apparatus may be assigned to the emergency response.
The duty chief will be notified immediately following coordination with dispatch.